







THE CICADAS  
AND OTHER POEMS

*By Aldous Huxley*

NOVELS

*Point Counter Point*  
*Those Barren Leaves*  
*Antic Hay*  
*Crome Yellow*

SHORT STORIES

*Brief Candles*  
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POETRY

*Leda*

DRAMA

*The Discovery*, adapted from  
Frances Sheridan

*Chatto & Windus*

T H E  
C I C A D A S

AND OTHER POEMS

BY

ALDOUS HUXLEY

CHATTO & WINDUS, LONDON

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# THE CICADAS

## AND OTHER POEMS

\*

### THEATRE OF VARIETIES

CIRCLE on circle the hanging gardens descend,  
Sloping from upper darkness, each flower face  
Open, turned to the light and laughter and life  
Of the sun-like stage. And all the space between,  
Like the hot fringes of a summer sky,  
Is quick with trumpets, beats with the pulse of drums,  
Athwart whose sultry thunders rise and fall  
Flute fountains and the swallow flight of strings.  
Music, the revelation and marvellous lie !  
On the bright trestles tumblers, tamers of beasts,  
Dancers and clowns affirm their fury of life.

‘The World-Renowned Van Hogen Mogen in  
The Master Mystery of Modern Times.’

He talks, he talks ; more powerfully than even  
Music his quick words hammer on men’s minds.

' Observe this hat, ladies and gentlemen ;  
 Empty, observe, empty as the universe  
 Before the Head for which this Hat is made  
 Was or could think. Empty, observe, observe.'  
 The rabbit kicks ; a bunch of paper flowers  
 Blooms in the limelight ; paper tape unrolls,  
 Endless, a clue. ' Ladies and gentlemen . . . '  
 Sharp, sharp on malleable minds his words  
 Hammer. The little Indian boy  
 Enters the basket. Bright, an Ethiop's sword  
 Transfixes it and bleeding is withdrawn.  
 Death draws and petrifies the watching faces.  
 ' Ladies and gentlemen ' : the great Van Hogen Mogen  
 Smiles and is kind. A puddle of dark blood  
 Slowly expands. ' The irremediable '  
 Has been and is no more.'  
 Empty of all but blood, the basket gapes.  
 ' Arise ! ' he calls, and blows his horn. ' Arise ! '  
 And bird-like from the highest gallery  
 The little Indian answers.  
 Scout upon shout, the hanging gardens reverberate.  
 Happy because the irremediable is healed,  
 Happy because they have seen the impossible,  
 Because they are freed from the dull daily law,

They shout, they shout. And great Van Hogen Mogen  
Modestly bows, graciously smiles. The band  
Confirms the lie with cymbals and bassoons,  
The curtain falls. How quickly the walls recede,  
How soon the petrified gargoyles re-become  
Women and men ! who fill the warm thick air  
With rumour of their loves and discontents,  
Not suffering even great Hogen Mogen—  
Only begetter out of empty hats  
Of rose and rabbit, raiser from the dead—  
To invade the sanctity of private life.

The Six Aerial Sisters Polpetini  
Dive dangerously from trapeze to far  
Trapeze, like stars, and know not how to fall.  
For if they did and if, of his silver balls,  
Sclopis, the juggler, dropped but one—but one  
Of all the flying atoms which he builds  
With his quick throwing into a solid arch—  
What panic then would shake the pale flower faces  
Blooming so tranquilly in their hanging beds !  
What a cold blast of fear ! But patrons must not,  
And since they must not, cannot be alarmed.  
Hence Sclopis, hence (the proof is manifest)

The Six Aerial Ones infallibly  
Function, and have done, and for ever will.

Professor Chubb's Automaton performs  
Upon the viols and virginals, plays chess,  
Ombre and loo, mistigri, tric-trac, pushpin,  
Sings Lilliburlero in falsetto, answers  
All questions put to it, and with its rubber feet  
Noiselessly dances the antique heydiguy.  
'Is it a man?' the terrible infant wonders.  
And 'no,' they say, whose business it is  
To say such infants nay. And 'no' again  
They shout when, after watching Dobbs and Debs  
Step simultaneously through intricate dances,  
Hammer the same tune with their rattling clogs  
In faultless unison, the infant asks,  
'And they, are they machines?'

Music, the revelation and marvellous lie,  
Rebuilds in the minds of all a suave and curving  
Kingdom of Heaven, where the saxophone  
Affirms everlasting loves, the drums deny  
Death, and where great Tenorio, when he sings,  
Makes Picardy bloom only with perfumed roses,

And never a rotting corpse in all its earth.  
Play, music, play ! In God's bright limelight eyes  
An angel walks and with one rolling glance  
Blesses each hungry flower in the hanging gardens.  
' Divine,' they cry, having no words by which  
To call the nameless spade a spade, ' Divine  
Zenocrate ! ' There are dark mysteries  
Whose name is beauty, strange revelations called  
Love, and a gulph of pleasure and of awe  
Where words fall vain and wingless in the dark ;  
Thè seen Ineffable, the felt but all-Unknown  
And Undescribed, is God. ' Divine, divine ! '  
The god-intoxicated shout goes up.  
' Divine Zenocrate ! '  
' Father,' the terrible infant's voice is shrill,  
' Say, father, why does the lady wear no skirts ? '  
She wears no skirts ; God's eyes have never been brighter.  
The face flowers open in her emanation.  
She is the suave and curving Kingdom of Heaven  
Made visible, and in her sugared song  
The ear finds paradise. Divine, divine !  
Her belly is like a mound of wheat, her breasts  
Are towers, her hair like a flock of goats.  
Her foot is feat with diamond toes

And she—divine Zenocrate—  
And she on legs of ruby goes.  
The face flowers tremble in the rushing wind  
Of her loud singing. A poet in the pit  
Jots down in tears the words of her Siren song.  
So every spirit as it is most pure,  
And hath in it the more of heavenly light,  
So it the rarer body doth procure  
To habit in, and is more fairly dight  
With cheerful grace and amiable sight :  
For of the soul the body form doth take ;  
And soul is form and doth the body make.  
' Now, boys, together. All with me,' she cries  
Through the long sweet suspense of dominant chords  
' For of the soul,' her voice is paradise,  
' For of the soul the body form doth take ;  
And soul is form and doth the body make.'  
Zenocrate, alone, alone divine !

God save the King. Music's last practical joke  
Still bugling in their ears of war and glory,  
The folk emerge into the night.  
Already next week's bills are being posted :—  
Urim and Thummim, cross-talk comedians ;

Ringpok, the Magian of Tibet ;  
The Two Bedelias ; Ruby and Truby Dix ;  
Sam Foy and Troupe of Serio-Comic Cyclists . . .  
Theatre of immemorial varieties,  
Old mummary, but mummers never the same !  
Twice nightly every night from now till doomsday  
The hanging gardens, bedded with pale flower faces,  
Young flowers in the old old gardens, will echo  
With ever new, with ever new delight.



## PICTURE BY GOYA

### A HIGHWAY ROBBERY

It is a scene of murder—elegant, is it not ?  
You lutanists, who play to naked Queens,  
As summer sleep or music under trees,  
As luncheon on the grass—the grass on which  
The country copulatives make sport, the pale  
Grass with the tall tubed hats, the inky coats  
And rosy, rosy among the funeral black  
(*Memento Vivere*) a naked girl.  
But here the sleepers bleed, the tumbling couples  
Struggle, but not in love ; the naked girl  
Kneels at the feet of one who hesitates,  
Voluptuously, between a rape and a murder.

Bandits angelical and you, rich corpses !  
Truth is your sister, Goodness your spouse.  
Towering skies lean down and tall, tall trees  
Impose their pale arsenical benediction,  
Making all seem exquisitely remote  
And small and silent, like a village fair

Seen from the hill-top, far far below.  
And yet they walk on the village green to whom  
The fair is huge, tumultuous, formidable. Earth  
Lies unremembered beneath the feet of dancers  
Who, looking up, see not the sky, but towers  
And bright invading domes and the fierce swings,  
Scythe-like, reaping and ravaging the quiet.  
And when night falls, the shuddering gas-flares scoop  
Out of the topless dark a little vault  
Of smoky gold, wherein the dancers still  
Jig away, gods of a home-made universe.

# CALIGULA

## OR THE TRIUMPH OF BEAUTY

PROW after prow, the floating ships  
Bridge the blue gulph ; the road is laid ;  
And Caesar on a piebald horse  
Prances with all his cavalcade.

Drunk with their own quick blood they go.  
The waves flash as with seeing eyes ;  
The tumbling cliffs mimic their speed,  
And they have filled the vacant skies

With waltzing Gods and Virtues, set  
Aeolus roaring with their shout,  
Made Vesta's temple on the cape  
Spin like a circus roundabout.

The twined caduceus in his hand,  
And having golden wings for spurs,  
Young Caesar dressed as God looks on  
And cheers his jolly mariners ;

Cheers as they heave from off the bridge  
The trippers from the seaside town ;  
Laughs as they bang the bobbing heads  
And shove them bubbling down to drown.

There sweeps a spiral curve of gesture  
From the allegoric sky ;  
Beauty, like conscious lightning, runs  
Through Jove's ribbed trunk and Juno's thigh,

Slides down the flank of Mars and takes  
From Virtue's rump a dizzier twist,  
Licks round a cloud and whirling stoops  
Earthwards to Caesar's lifted fist.

A burgess tumbles from the bridge  
Headlong, and hurrying Beauty slips  
From Caesar through the plunging legs  
To the blue sea between the ships.

## NERO AND SPORUS

### OR THE TRIUMPH OF ART

THE Christians by whose muddy light  
Dimly, dimly I divine  
Your eyes and see your pallid beauty  
Like a pale night-primrose shine,

Colourless in the dark, revere  
A God who slowly died that they  
Might suffer the less, who bore the pain  
Of all time in a single day,  
The pain of all men in a single  
Wounded body and sad heart.

The yellow marble, smooth as water,  
Builds me a Golden House ; and there  
The marble Gods sleep in their strength  
And the white Parian girls are fair.

Roses and waxen oleanders,  
Green grape bunches and the flushed peach—  
All beautiful things I taste, touch, see,  
Knowing, loving, becoming each.

The ship went down, my mother swam :  
I wedded and myself was wed :  
Old Claudius died of emperor-bane :  
Old Seneca too slowly bled.

The wild beast and the victim both,  
The ravisher and the wincing bride,  
King of the world and a slave's slave,  
Terror-haunted, deified——

All these, sweet Sporus, I, an artist,  
Am and, an artist, needs must be.  
Is the tune Lydian ? I have loved you.  
And you have heard my symphony

Of wailing voices and clashed brass,  
With long shrill flutings that suspend  
Pain o'er a muttering gulph of terrors,  
And piercing blasts of joy that end,

Gods, in what discord !—could I have  
So hymned the Furies, were the bane  
Still sap within the hemlock stalk,  
The red swords virgin-bright again ?

Or take a child's love that is all  
Worship, all tenderness and trust,  
A dawn-web, dewy and fragile—take  
And with the violence of lust

Tear and defile it. You shall hear  
The breaking dumbness and the thin  
Harsh crying that is the very music  
Of shame and the remorse of sin.

Christ died ; the artist lives for all ;  
Loves, and his naked marbles stand  
Pure as a column on the sky,  
Whose lips, whose breasts, whose thighs  
demand

Not our humiliation, not  
The shuddering of an after-shame ;  
And of his agonies men know  
Only the beauty born of them.

Christ died, but living Nero turns  
Your mute remorse to song ; he gives  
To idiot Fate eyes like a lover's,  
And while his music plays, God lives.

## NERO AND SPORUS

### II

DARK stirrings in the perfumed air  
Touch your cheeks, lift your hair.  
With softer fingers I caress,  
Sporus, all your loveliness.  
Round as a fruit, tree-tangled shines  
The moon ; and fire-flies in the vines,  
Like stars in a delirious sky,  
Gleam and go out. Unceasingly  
The fountains fall, the nightingales  
Sing. But time flows and love avails  
Nothing. The Christians smoulder red ;  
Their brave blue-hearted flames are dead ;  
And you, sweet Sporus, you and I  
We too must die, we too must die.



## MYTHOLOGICAL INCIDENT

THROUGH the pale skeleton of woods  
Orion walks. The North Wind lays  
Its cold lips to the twin steel flutes  
That are his gun, and plays.

Knee-deep he goes, where penny-wiser  
Than all his kind who steal and hoard,  
Year after year some sylvan miser  
His copper wealth has stored.

The Queen of Love and Beauty lays  
In neighbouring beechen aisles her baits—  
Bread-crumbs and the golden maize.  
Patiently she waits.

And when the unwary pheasant comes  
To fill his painted maw with crumbs,  
Accurately the sporting Queen  
Takes aim. The bird has been.

Secure, Orion walks her way.  
The Cyprian loads, presents, makes fire.  
He falls. 'Tis Venus all entire  
Attached to her recumbent prey.

## F E M M E S   D A M N É E S

(From the French of Charles Baudelaire)

THE lamps had languisht and their light was pale ;  
On cushions deep Hippolyta reclined.  
Those potent kisses that had torn the veil  
From her young candour filled her dreaming mind.

With tempest-troubled eyes she sought the blue  
Heaven of her innocence, how far away !  
Like some sad traveller, who turns to view  
The dim horizons passed at dawn of day.

Tears and the muffled light of weary eyes,  
The stupor and the dull voluptuous trance,  
Limp arms, like weapons dropped by one who flies—  
All served her fragile beauty to enhance.

Calm at her feet and joyful, Delphine lay  
And gazed at her with ardent eyes and bright,  
Like some strong beast that, having mauled its prey,  
Draws back to mark the imprint of its bite.

Strong and yet bowed, superbly on her knees,  
She snuffed her triumph, on that frailer grace  
Poring voluptuously, as though to seize  
The signs of thanks upon the other's face.

Gazing, she sought in her pale victim's eye  
The speechless canticle that pleasure sings,  
The infinite gratitude that, like a sigh,  
Mounts slowly from the spirit's deepest springs.

' Now, now you understand (for love like ours  
Is proof enough) that 'twere a sin to throw  
The sacred holocaust of your first flowers  
To those whose breath might parch them as they blow.

' Light falls my kiss, as the ephemeral wing  
That scarcely stirs the shining of a lake.  
What ruinous pain your lover's kiss would bring !  
A plough that leaves a furrow in its wake.

' Over you, like a herd of ponderous kine,  
Man's love will pass and his caresses fall  
Like trampling hooves. Then turn your face to mine ;  
Turn, oh my heart, my half of me, my all !

‘ Turn, turn, that I may see their starry lights,  
Your eyes of azure ; turn. For one dear glance  
I will reveal love’s most obscure delights,  
And you shall drowse in pleasure’s endless trance.’

‘ Not thankless, nor repentant in the least  
Is your Hippolyta.’ She raised her head.  
‘ But one who from some grim nocturnal feast  
Returns at dawn feels less disquieted.

‘ I bear a weight of terrors, and dark hosts  
Of phantoms haunt my steps and seem to lead.  
I walk, compelled, behind these beckoning ghosts  
Down sliding roads and under skies that bleed.

‘ Is ours so strange an act, so full of shame ?  
Explain the terrors that disturb my bliss.  
When you say, Love, I tremble at the name ;  
And yet my mouth is thirsty for your kiss.

‘ Ah, look not so, dear sister, look not so !  
You whom I love, even though that love should be  
A snare for my undoing, even though  
Loving I am lost for all eternity.’

Delphine looked up, and fate was in her eye.  
From the god's tripod and beneath his spell,  
Shaking her tragic locks, she made reply :  
' Who in love's presence dares to speak of hell ?

' Thinker of useless thoughts, let him be cursed,  
Who in his folly, venturing to vex  
A question answerless and barren, first  
With wrong and right involved the things of sex !

\* ' He who in mystical accord conjoins  
Shadow with heat, dusk with the noon's high fire,  
Shall never warm the palsy of his loins  
At that red sun which mortals call desire.

' Go, seek some lubber groom's deflowering lust ;  
Take him your heart and leave me here despised !  
Go—and bring back, all horror and disgust,  
The livid breasts man's love has stigmatized.

' One may not serve two masters here below.'  
But the child answered : ' I am torn apart,  
I feel my inmost being rent, as though  
A gulf had yawned—the gulf that is my heart.

‘ Naught may this monster’s desperate thirst assuage,—  
As fire ’tis hot, as space itself profound—  
Naught stay the Fury from her quenchless rage,  
Who with her torch explores its bleeding wound.

‘ Curtain the world away and let us try  
If lassitude will bring the boon of rest.  
In your deep bosom I would sink and die,  
Would find the grave’s fresh coolness on your breast.’

Hence, lamentable victims, get you hence !  
Hell yawns beneath, your road is straight and steep.  
Where all the crimes receive their recompense  
Wind-whipped and seething in the lowest deep

With a huge roaring as of storms and fires,  
Go down, mad phantoms, doomed to seek in vain  
The ne’er-won goal of unassuaged desires,  
And in your pleasures find eternal pain !

Sunless your caverns are ; the fever damps  
That filter in through every crannied vent  
Break out with marsh-fire into sudden lamps  
And steep your bodies with their frightful scent.

The barrenness of pleasures harsh and stale  
Makes mad your thirst and parches up your skin ;  
And like an old flag volleying in the gale,  
Your whole flesh shudders in the blasts of sin.

Far from your kind, outlawed and reprobate,  
Go, prowl like wolves through desert worlds apart !  
Disordered souls, fashion your own dark fate,  
And flee the god you carry in your heart.



## A R A B I A   I N F E L I X

UNDER a ceiling of cobalt  
And mirrored by as void a blue,  
Wet only with the wind-blown salt,  
The Arabian land implores a dew.

Parched, parched are the hills, and dumb  
That thundering voice of the ravine ;  
Round the dead springs the birds are seen  
No more, no more at evening come

(Like lovely thoughts to one who dwells  
In quiet, like enchanting hopes)  
The leopards and the shy gazelles  
And the light-footed antelopes.

Death starts at every rattling gust  
That in the withered torrent's bed  
Whirls up a phantom of grey'dust  
And, dying, lets the ghost fall dead

Dust in a dance may seem to live ;  
But laid, not blown, it brings to birth.  
Not wind, but only rain can give  
Life, and to a patient earth.

Hot wind from this Arabian land  
Chases the clouds, withholds the rain.  
No footstep prints the restless sand  
Wherein who sows, he sows in vain.

If there were water, if there were  
But a shower, a little fountain springing,  
How rich would be the perfumed air,  
And the green woods with shade and singing

Bright hills, but by the sun accursed,  
Peaceful, but with the peace of hell—  
Once on these barren slopes there fell  
A plague more violent than thirst :

Anguish to kill inveterate pain  
And mortal slaking of desire ;  
Dew, and a long-awaited rain—  
A dew of blood, a rain of fire.

Into a vacant sky the moist  
Grey pledge of spring and coming leaves  
Swam, and the thirsty hills rejoiced,  
All golden with their future sheaves.

Flower-phantoms in the parching air  
Nodded, and trees ungrown were bowed ;  
With love like madness, like despair,  
The mountain yearned towards the cloud.

And she in silence slowly came,  
Oh ! to transfigure, to renew,  
Came laden with a gift of dew,  
But with it dropped the lightning's flame ;

A flame that rent the crags apart,  
But rending made a road between  
For water to the mountain's heart,  
That left a scar, but left it green.

Faithless the cloud and fugitive ;  
An empty heaven nor burns, nor wets ;  
At peace, the barren land regrets  
Those agonies that made it live.

## THE MOOR

CHAMPION of souls and holiness, upholder  
Of all the virtues, father of the Church,  
Honest, honest, honest Iago ! how  
Crusadingly, with what indignant zeal  
(*Ora pro nobis*), caracoling on  
Your high horse and emblazoned, gules on white,  
. Did you ride forth (Oh, pray for us), ride forth  
Against the dark-skinned hosts of evil, ride,  
Martyr and saint, against those paynim hosts,  
Having for shield all Sinai, and for sword,  
To smite rebellion and avenge the Lord,  
The sharp, the shining certainty of faith !  
(*Ora pro nobis*) point us out the Way.

‘ Lily bright and stinking mud :  
Fair is fair and foul is ill.  
With her, on her, what you will.  
This fire must be put out with blood,  
Put out with blood.’

But for a glint, a hint of questing eyes,  
Invisible, darkness through darkness goes  
On feet that even in their victim's dreaming  
Wake not an echo.

Lost, he is lost ; and yet thus wholly in darkness  
Melted, the Moor is more Othello than when,  
Green-glittering, the sharp Venetian day  
Revealed him armed and kingly and commanding  
Captain of men.

How still she lies, this naked Desdemona,  
All but a child and sleeping and alone,  
How still and white !  
Whose breast, whose arms, the very trustfulness  
Of her closed eyelids and unhurried breath  
More than a philtre maddeningly invite  
Lust and those hands, those huge dark hands, and death.

‘ For oh, the lily and the mud !  
Fair is still fair and foulness, ill.  
With her, on her, what you will.  
This fire must be put out with blood.’

Well, now the fire is out, and the light too ;  
All, all put out. In Desdemona's place  
Lies now a carrion. That fixed grimace  
Of lidless eyes and starting tongue  
Derides his foolishness. Cover her face ;  
This thing but now was beautiful and young.  
Honest Iago's Christian work is over ;  
Short, short the parleying at the Golden Gate.  
' For I am one who made the Night ashamed  
Of his own essence, that his dark was dark ;  
• One who with good St. Jerome's filthy tongue  
Tainted desire and taught the Moor to scorn  
His love's pale body, and because she had  
Lain gladly in his arms, to call her whore  
And strangle her for whoredom.' So he spoke,  
And with majestic motion heaven's high door  
Rolled musically apart its burnished vans  
To grant him entrance.

Turning back meanwhile  
From outer darkness, Othello and his bride  
Perceive the globe of heaven like one small lamp

Burning alone at midnight in the abyss  
Of some cathedral cavern ; pause, and then  
With face once more averted, hand in hand,  
Explore the unseen treasures of the dark.

Romans bowed to shapes that they,  
Sculptors of the mind, set free ;  
Suppliant that they may be  
Peers of those to whom they pray.



## NOBLEST ROMANS

COLUMNS and unageing fountains,  
Jets of frost and living foam—  
Let them leap from seven mountains,  
The seven hills of Rome.

Flanked by arch and echoing arch,  
Let the streets in triumph go ;  
Bid the aqueducts to march  
Tireless through the plain below.

Column-high in the blue air,  
Let the marble Caesars stand ;  
Let the gods, who living were  
Romans, lift a golden hand.

Many, but each alone, a crowd,  
Yet of Romans, throng their shrine ;  
Worshippers themselves divine,  
Gods to gods superbly bowed ;

## ORION

TREE-TANGLED still, autumn Orion climbs  
Up from among the North Wind's shuddering emblems  
Into the torrent void  
And dark abstraction of invisible power,  
The heart and boreal substance of the night.

Pleione flees before him, and behind,  
Still sunken, but prophetically near,  
Death in the Scorpion hunts him up the sky  
And round the vault of time, round the slow-curving year,  
Follows unescapably  
And to the end, aye, and beyond the end  
Will follow, follow ; for of all the gods  
Death only cannot die.

The rest are mortal. And how many lie  
Already with their creatures' ancient dust !  
Dead even in us who live—or hardly live,  
Since of our hearts impiety has made,  
Not tombs indeed (for they are holy ; tombs

Secretly live with everlasting Death's  
Dark and mysterious life),  
But curious shops and learned lumber rooms  
Of bone and stone and every mummied thing,  
Where Death himself his sacred sting  
Forgets (how studiously forgotten  
Amid the irrelevant to and fro of feet !),  
Where by the peeping and the chattering,  
The loud forgetfulness seemingly slain,  
He lies with all the rest—and yet we know,  
In secret yet we know,  
Death is not dead, not dead but only sleeping,  
And soon will rise again.

Not so the rest. Only the Scorpion burns  
In our unpeopled heaven of empty names  
And insubstantial echoes ; only Death  
Still claims our prayers, and still to those who pray  
Returns his own dark blood and quickening breath,  
Returns the ominous mystery of fear.  
Where are the gods of dancing and desire ?  
Anger and joy, laughter and tears and wine,  
Those other mysteries of fire and flame,  
Those more divine than Death's—ah, where are they ?

Only a ghost between the shuddering trees,  
Only a name and ghostly numbers climb ;  
And where a god pursued and fled,  
Only a ghostly time, a ghostly place  
Attends on other ghostly times and places.  
Orion and the rest are dead.

And yet to-night, here in the exulting wind,  
Amid the enormous laughters of a soul  
At once the world's and mine,  
God-like Orion and all his brother stars  
Shine as with living eyes,  
With eyes that glance a recognition, glance a sign  
Across the quickened dark, across the gulphs  
That separate no more,  
But, like wide seas that yet bring home the freight  
Of man's mad yearning for a further shore,  
Join with a living touch, unbrokenly,  
Life to mysterious life,  
The Hunter's alien essence to my own.

Orion lives ; yet I who know him living,  
Elsewhere and otherwise  
Know him for dead, and dead beyond all hope,

For 'tis the infertile and unquickenng death  
Of measured places and recorded times,  
The death of names and numbers that he dies.  
Only the phantom of Orion climbs.  
Put out the eyes, put out the living eyes  
And look elsewhere ; yes, look and think and be  
Elsewhere and otherwise.  
But *here* and *thus* are also in their right,  
Are in their right divine to send this wind of laughter  
Rushing through the cloudless dark  
And through my being ; have a right divine  
And imprescriptible now to reveal  
The starry god, a right to make me feel,  
As even now, as even now I feel,  
His living presence near me in the night.

A curved and figured glass hangs between light and light,  
Between the glow within us and the glow  
Of what mysterious sun without ?  
Vast over earth and sky, or focussed burningly  
Upon the tender quick, our spirits throw  
Each way their images—each way the forms  
O ! shall it be of beauty, shall it be  
The naked skeletons of doubt ?

Or else, symbolically dark, the cloudy forms  
Of mystery, or dark (but dark with death)  
Shapes of sad knowledge and defiling hate ?

‘ Lighten our darkness, Lord.’ With what pure faith,  
What confident hope our fathers once implored  
The Light ! But ’tis the shitten Lord of Flies  
Who with his loathsome bounties now fulfils  
On us their prayers. Our fathers prayed for light.  
Through windows at their supplication scoured  
Bare of the sacred blazons, but instead  
Daubed with the dung-god’s filth, all living eyes,  
Whether of stars or men, look merely dead ;  
While on the vaulted crystal of the night  
Our guttering souls project,  
Not the Wild Huntsman, not the Heavenly Hosts,  
But only times and places, only names and ghosts.

And yet, for all the learned Lord of Dung,  
The choice is ours, the choice is always ours,  
To see or not to see the living powers  
That move behind the numbered points and times.  
The Fly King rules ; but still the choice remains  
With us, his subjects, we are free, are free

To love our fate or loathe it ; to rejoice  
Or weep or wearily accept ; are free,  
For all the scouring of our souls, for all  
The miring of their crystal, free to give  
Even to an empty sky, to vacant names,  
Or not to give, our worship ; free to turn  
Lifewards, within, without, to what transcends  
The squalor of our personal ends and aims,  
Or not to turn ; yes, free to die or live ;  
Free to be thus and passionately here,  
Or otherwise and elsewhere ;  
Free, in a word, to learn or not to learn  
The art to think and musically do  
And feel and be, the never more than now  
Difficult art harmoniously to live  
All poetry—the midnight of Macbeth  
And ripe Odysseus and the undying light  
Of Gemma's star and Cleopatra's death  
And Falstaff in his cups ; the art to live  
That discipline of flowers, that solemn dance  
Of sliding weights and harnessed powers  
Which is a picture ; or to live the grave  
And stoical recession, row on row,  
Of equal columns, live the passionate leaping,

The mutual yearning, meeting, marrying,  
And then the flame-still rapture, the fierce trance  
Of consummation in the Gothic night.

The choice is always ours. Then, let me choose  
The longest art, the hard Promethean way  
Cherishingly to tend and feed and fan  
That inward fire, whose small precarious flame,  
Kindled or quenched, creates  
The noble or the ignoble men we are,  
The worlds we live in and the very fates,  
Our bright or muddy star.

Up from among the emblems of the wind  
Into its heart of power,  
The Huntsman climbs, and all his living stars  
Are bright, and all are mine.



## MEDITATION

WHAT now caresses you, a year ago  
Bent to the wind that sends a travelling wave  
Almost of silver through the silky corn  
Westward of Calgary ; or two weeks since  
Bleated in Gloster market, lowed at Thame,  
And slowly bled to give my lips desire ;  
Or in the teeming darkness, fathoms down,  
Hung, one of millions, poised between the ooze  
And the wind's foamy skirts ; or feathered flew,  
Or deathwards ran before the following gun.  
And all day long, knee deep in the wet grass,  
The piebald cows of Edam chewed and chewed,  
That what was cheese might pulse thus feverishly ;  
And now, prophetically, even now  
They ponder in their ruminating jaws  
My future body, which in Tuscan fields  
Yet grows, yet grunts among the acorns, yet  
Is salt and iron, water and touchless air,  
Is only numbers variously moved,  
Is nothing, yet will love your nothingness.

Vast forms of dust, tawny and tall and vague,  
March through the desert, creatures of the wind.  
Wind, blowing whither, blowing whence, who knows?—  
Wind was the soul that raised them from the sand,  
Moved and sustained their movement, and at last  
Abating, let them fall in separate grains  
Slowly to earth and left an empty sky.

## S E P T E M B E R

SPRING is past and over these many days,  
Spring and summer. The leaves of September droop,  
Yellowing and all but dead on the patient trees.  
Nor is there any hope in me. I walk  
Slowly homewards. Night is as empty and dark  
Behind my eyes as it is dark without  
And empty round about me and over me.  
Spring is past and over these many days,  
But, looking up, suddenly I see  
Leaves in the upthrown light of a street lamp shining,  
Clear and luminous, young and so transparent,  
They seem but the coloured foam of air, green fire,  
No more than the scarce-embodied thoughts of leaves.  
And it is spring within that circle of light.  
Oh, magical brightness ! The old leaves are made new  
In the mind, too, some coloured accident  
Of beauty revives and makes all young again,  
A chance light shines and suddenly it is spring.

## SEASONS

BLOOD of the world, time stanchless flows ;  
The wound is mortal and is mine.  
I act, but not to my design,  
Choose, but 'twas ever fate that chose,  
Would flee, but there are doors that close.  
Winter has set its muddy sign  
Without me and within. The rose  
Dies also in my heart and no stars shine.

But nightingales call back the sun ;  
The doors are down and I can run,  
Can laugh, for destiny is dead.  
All springs are hoarded in the flowers ;  
Quick flow the intoxicating hours,  
For wine as well as blood is red.

## STORM AT NIGHT

Oh, how aquarium-still, how brooding-warm  
This paradise ! How peacefully in the womb  
Of war itself, and at the heart of storm  
How safely—safely a captive, in a tomb—  
I lie and, listening to the wild assault,  
The pause and once-more fury of the gale,  
Feel through the cracks of my sepulchral vault  
The *fine-drawn* probe of air, and watch the pale  
Unearthly lightnings leap across the sky  
Like sudden sperm and die and leap again.  
The thunder calls and every spasm of fire  
Beckons, a signal, to that old desire  
In calm for tempest and at ease for pain.  
Dreaming of strength and courage, here I lie.

## MEDITERRANEAN

THIS tideless sapphire uniformly brims  
Its jewelled circle of Tyrrhenian shore.  
No vapours tarnish, not a cloud bedims,  
And time descending only more and more  
Makes rich, makes deep the unretiring gem.  
And yet for me who look on it, how wide  
The world of mud to which my thoughts condemn  
This loathing vision of a sunken tide !  
The ebb is mine. Life to its lowest neap  
Withdrawn reveals that black and hideous shoal  
Where I lie stranded. Oh deliver me  
From this defiling death ! Moon of the soul,  
Call back the tide that ran so strong and deep,  
Call back the shining jewel of the sea.

## T I D E

AND if the tide should be for ever low,  
The silted channels turned to ooze and mire ?  
And this grey delta—if it still should grow,  
Bank after bank, and still the sea retire ?  
Retire beyond the halcyon hopes of noon  
And silver night, the threat of wind and wave,  
Past all the dark compulsion of the moon,  
Past resurrection, past her power to save ?  
There is a firm consenting to disaster,  
Proud resignation to accepted pain.  
Pain quickens him who makes himself its master,  
And quickening battle crowns both loss and gain.  
But to this silting of the soul, who gives  
Consent is no more man, no longer lives.

## FETE NATIONALE

THESE lamps, like some miraculous gift of rain,  
Evoke an April from the dusty weight  
Of leaves that hang resigned and know their fate,  
Expecting autumn : they are young again.  
And young these dancers underneath the trees  
Who pass and pass, how many all at one !  
Like things of wax beneath an Indian sun,  
Melted in music. Oh, to be one of these,  
Of these the born inhabitants of earth,  
Each other's joyful captives ! Oh, to be  
Safe home from those far islands, where the free,  
Whose exile buys the honour of their birth,  
Hark back across the liberating sea  
To the lost continent of tears and mirth !



## M I D S U M M E R   D A Y

THIS day was midsummer, the longest tarrying  
Time makes between two sleeps.   What have I done  
With this longest of so few days, how spent,  
Dear God, the golden, golden gift of sun ?  
Virginal, when I rose, the morning lay  
Ready for beauty's rape, for wisdom's marrying.  
I wrote : only an inky spider went,  
Smear after smear, across the unsullied day.  
If there were other places, if there were  
But other days than this longest of few ;  
If one had courage, did one dare to do  
That which alone might kill what now defaces  
This the one place of all the countless places,  
This only day when one will never dare !

## AUTUMN STILLNESS

GRAY is the air and silent as the sea's  
Abysmal calm. One solitary bird  
Calls from far time and other boughs than these ;  
But the remembering silence sleeps, unstirred.  
All seems achieved, dried up the source of things.  
Or is the world too weary to invite  
Winters unborn and bid the latent springs  
Break out in flower, in fragrance, voice and light ?  
June once was here ; in this autumnal amber  
Lingers intangible the small clear trace  
Of his ephemeral flight, for ever still.  
No more to hope, but only to remember :—  
Let there be silence round the slumbering will,  
And if time beckons, turn away your face.

## A P E N N I N E

IN this parcht Apennine the sheep-bells must  
Serve with their tinkling for the liquid lapse  
And coolness, even in the noonday dust,  
Of absent streams—more liquidly, perhaps,  
Than water's self, if water were to gush  
Between the dry ribs of these bleaching hills :  
For in the womb of every pregnant hush  
A music sleeps ; and when some phantom tills,  
*Arabia's punctual blossoming discloses*  
Hues more than earthly, iris and evening gold.  
But vain those fountains, vain the ethereal roses !  
There breathes no fragrance but of roots and mould,  
No quenching flows but in those humbler streams,  
Whose source is earth, is earth and not our dreams.

## ALMERIA

WINDS have no moving emblems here, but scour  
A vacant darkness, an untempered light ;  
No branches bend, never a tortured flower  
Shudders, root-weary, on the verge of flight ;  
Winged future, withered past, no seeds nor leaves  
Attest those swift invisible feet : they run  
Free through a naked land, whose breast receives  
All the fierce ardour of a naked sun.  
You have the Light for lover. Fortunate Earth !  
Conceive the fruit of his divine desire.  
But the dry dust is all she brings to birth,  
That child of clay by even celestial fire.  
Then come, soft rain and tender clouds, abate  
This shining love that has the force of hate.

## P A G A N   Y E A R

HEAVEN's eyes are shut, but cannot wholly kill  
The colours of the winter world.   Suppressed  
And yet how strong, shining in secret, still  
Cinder and brooding sable and plum attest  
The absent Light.   He with his longed rebirth  
Unclots the world to an airy dream of leaves ;  
Shines on ; the thin dream ripens into earth,  
And the huge elms hang dark above the sheaves.  
Magical autumn !   All the woods are foxes,  
Dozing outstretched in the almost silvery sun.  
Oh, bright sad woods and melancholy sky,  
Is there no cure for beauty but to run  
Yet faster as faster flee hours, flowers and doxies  
And dying music, until we also die ?

## A R M O U R

CRABS in their shells, because they cannot play  
Don Juan or the flageolet, are safe ;  
And every stout Sir Roger, stout Sir Ralph,  
Every Black Prince, Bayard and Bouchier may  
(Their ribs and rumps hermetically canned)  
Securely laugh at arrow, sword and mace.  
But in their polished and annealed embrace,  
Beneath their iron kiss and iron hand,  
The soft defenceless lips and flowery breast,  
The tender, tender belly of love receive  
From helm and clasping cop and urgent greave  
So deep a bruise that, mortally possessed,  
Love dies. Only the vulnerable will  
Holds what it takes and, holding, does not kill.

## S H E E P

SEEING a country churchyard, when the grey  
Monuments walked, I with a second glance,  
Doubting, postponed the apparent judgment day  
To watch instead the random slow advance  
Across the down of a hundred nibbling sheep.  
And yet these tombs, half fancied and half seen  
In the dim world between waking and sleep,  
These headstones browsing on their plot of green,  
Were sheep indeed and emblems of all life.  
For man to dust, dust turns to grass, and grass  
Grows wool and feeds on grass. The butcher's knife  
Works magic, and the ephemeral sheep forms pass  
Through swift tombs and through silent tombs, until  
Once more God's acre feeds across the hill.

## BLACK COUNTRY

COUNT yourselves happy that you are not rewarded  
For your deserts with brimstone from on high.  
Mean, mean among the slag-heaps, mean and sordid,  
Your smoking town proclaims its blasphemy.  
And yet, too merciful, the offended light  
Forgives not only, but with vespéral gold  
And roses of the sun repays your spite.  
Shining transfigured in the Northern cold,  
Instead of chimneys rise Italian towers,  
While temples at their feet, not factories, shine ;  
And like the yet unbodied dream of flowers  
Hangs the flushed smoke, through which these eyes  
    divine  
Enormous gestures of the gods' fierce wooing,  
The nacreous flights, the limbs of bronze pursuing.



## CARPE NOCTEM

THERE is *no* future, there is *no* more past,  
No roots nor fruits, but momentary flowers.  
Lie still, only lie still and night will last,  
Silent and dark, not for a space of hours,  
But everlastingly. Let me forget  
All but your perfume, every night but this,  
The shame, the fruitless weeping, the regret.  
Only lie still : this faint and quiet bliss  
Shall flower upon the brink of sleep and spread,  
Till there is nothing else but you and I  
Clasped in a timeless silence. But like one  
Who, doomed to die, at morning will be dead,  
I know, though night seem dateless, that the sky  
Must brighten soon before to-morrow's sun.

## THE PERGOLA

PILLARS, round which the wooden serpents clamber  
Towards their own leaves, support the emerald shade,  
The eyes, the amethysts, the clustered amber,  
That weave the ceiling of this colonnade.  
How many thousand Tyrrhenian Septembers  
Muskily ripen in a sun-warmed skin !  
With all my autumns. For this tongue remembers  
Grapes that made sweet a sick child's medicine,  
Grapes of the South and of the submarine  
Dusk of an English hot-house. But when night  
Lids every shining glance of sky between  
Leaves now extinct, groping, bereft of sight,  
*I reach for grapes, but from an inward vine*  
Pluck sea-cold nipples, still bedewed with brine.

## L I N E S

ALL day the wheels turn ;  
All day long the roaring of wheels, the rasping  
Weave their imprisoning lattices of noise,  
And hammers, hammers in the substance of the world  
Carve out another cavernous world, a narrow  
Sepulchre, and seal it from the sky,  
Lord, with how great a stone !

Only a little beyond the factory walls  
Silence is a flawless bowl of crystal,  
Brimming, brimming with who can say beforehand,  
Who can, returning, even remember what  
Beautiful secret. Only a little beyond  
These hateful walls the birds among the branches  
Secretly come and go.

Time also sleeps, but on the darkening threshold  
Of each eternity pauses a moment  
And still is time, but empty ; still is time,  
And therefore knows his emptiness.

The walls are crumbled, the stone is rolled away  
(Is there one within ? is there a resurrection ?) ;  
Stars through the ruined lattices bear witness, '  
Bear shining witness to the further silence,  
Witness to the night.

Night is pregnant ; silence, alive with voices ;  
The fullness of the tomb is but corruption ;  
Only the lifted stone invites the messengers,  
Only the empty sepulchre, and only  
Now and then, evokes  
That which from the sepulchre arises.

Shy strangers, visiting feet came softly treading,  
Came very softly sometimes in the darkness,  
Oh, of what far nights and distant tombs !  
Came suddenly into the empty time,  
Came secretly and lingered secretly,  
And through the unsealed door  
Beckoned me on to follow.

I have made time empty again ; empty, it invites them ;  
They do not come ; have rolled away the stone,

But lie unrisen, lie unvisited.  
Merciful God, bid them to come again !  
Sometimes in winter  
Sea-birds follow the plough,  
And the bare field is all alive with wings,  
With their white wings and unafraid alightings,  
Sometimes in winter. And will they come again ?

## THE CICADAS

SIGHTLESS, I breathe and touch ; this night of pines  
Is needly, resinous and rough with bark.  
Through every crevice in the tangible dark  
The moonlessness above it all but shines.

Limp hangs the leafy sky ; never a breeze  
Stirs, nor a foot in all this sleeping ground ;  
And there is silence underneath the trees—  
The living silence of continuous sound.

For like inveterate remorse, like shrill  
Delirium throbbing in the fevered brain,  
An unseen people of cicadas fill  
Night with their one harsh note, again, again.

Again, again, with what insensate zest !  
What fury of persistence, hour by hour !  
Filled with what devil that denies them rest,  
Drunk with what source of pleasure and of power !

Life is their madness, life that all night long  
Bids them to sing and sing, they know not why ;  
Mad cause and senseless burden of their song ;  
For life commands, and Life ! is all their cry.

I hear them sing, who in the double night  
Of clouds and branches fancied that I went  
Through my own spirit's dark discouragement,  
Deprived of inward as of outward sight :

Who, seeking, even as here in the wild wood,  
A lamp to beckon through my tangled fate,  
Found only darkness and, disconsolate,  
Mourned the lost purpose and the vanished good.

Now in my empty heart the crickets' shout  
Re-echoing denies and still denies  
With stubborn folly all my learned doubt,  
In madness more than I in reason wise.

Life, life ! The word is magical. They sing,  
And in my darkened soul the great sun shines ;  
My fancy blossoms with remembered spring,  
And all my autumns ripen on the vines.

Life ! and each knuckle of the fig-tree's pale  
Dead skeleton breaks out with emerald fire.  
Life ! and the tulips blow, the nightingale  
Calls back the rose, calls back the old desire :

And old desire that is for ever new,  
Desire, life's earliest and latest birth,  
Life's instrument to suffer and to do,  
Springs with the roses from the teeming earth ;

Desire that from the world's bright body strips  
Deforming time and makes each kiss the first ;  
That gives to hearts, to satiated lips  
The endless bounty of to-morrow's thirst.

Time passes, and the watery moonrise peers  
Between the tree-trunks. But no outer light  
Tempers the chances of our groping years,  
No moon beyond our labyrinthine night.

Clueless we go ; but I have heard thy voice,  
Divine Unreason ! harping in the leaves,  
And grieve no more ; for wisdom never grieves,  
And thou hast taught me wisdom ; I rejoice.



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